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❖THE❖OLD❖TESTAMENT❖STUDENT.❖

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THE statement, promised by the editor, concerning the lists of books published in former numbers of the STUDENT, is necessarily crowded out of this number by the material relating to the Institute of Hebrew. It may be expected in the March issue.

STUDENTS of Biblical literature will have great reason to rejoice, if the rumors respecting a new exploring expedition to Babylonia shall prove true. No authoritative announcement of the plans or even of the facts has yet been published, though certain daily papers have professed to furnish all details. The proposed expedition will go out under the leadership and management of Rev. Prof. John P. Peters, Ph. D., of the Protestant Episcopal Divinity School of Philadelphia. Professor Peters and the city of brotherly love may well be congratulated upon this movement, so important and, under such direction, so sure of success.

IF the readers of the STUDENT will examine carefully and honestly, according to the outline sketched by Professor Burroughs, the "studies" on Jonah, Amos and Hosea in this number (pp. 198-207), the result, we are confident, will much more than justify the labor expended. If there is any method of Bible-study which will produce results, it is the method according to which this presentation of the material is given us. Will not those who are skeptical try it? It is generally conceded that, so far as concerns genuine acquisition of biblical knowledge, most methods now in vogue fail utterly. The difficulty in the case lies in the fact that the necessary *work* is not done. Nineteen out of twenty who try to study the Bible do not know how to go about it. Professor Burroughs does not simply give results of his own work, a thing which any professional student can do with ease; but he leads the student by clear and definite directions, by wise and timely suggestions, to do the work *for himself*; and after all, this is the true and the only secret of success.

WE beg our readers not to pass by the "reports" of the American Institute of Hebrew, portions of which, as in former years, are published in the STUDENT. It is true that there is no organic or business connection between the Institute and the journal; but there *is*, if possible, a closer connection, viz., that which always exists between institutions designed to accomplish the same end. The work of the INSTITUTE and the work of THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT are *one* work. Both, as a matter of fact, were a part of one common plan. They had their origin at the same time, and their work, for the seven years of their existence, has been mutually helpful. In the constituency of the STUDENT, the Institute has always found its warmest friends. May we not hope that, as this constituency increases, the number of the Institute's friends may likewise increase?

A STUDY of the reports will show several facts of interest: (1) that the Correspondence School of Hebrew is steadily increasing its efficiency and widening the scope of its work; (2) that in the Summer Schools of last year the attendance was forty-five per cent. greater than that of the preceding year; (3) that the older schools continue to grow and develop as rapidly as could be expected, notwithstanding the establishment of new schools; (4) that there is a strong demand for additional schools, in sections of the country remote from the localities in which schools are now held, and that arrangements are being made for meeting this demand; (5) that the corps of instructors in the schools includes men of almost every denomination and section, many of whom occupy the highest position in their departments; (6) that the work is managed and directed by an organization which includes nearly every professor of Hebrew or Old Testament study in the country; (7) that its financial support comes from north, east, south and west (read the list of donors and donations); (8) that while the period of five years for which the work (as re-organized, Jan. 1, 1885) was originally undertaken is now approaching its end, plans are being prepared for its permanent establishment.

When these things are considered, and when account is taken of additional facts: e. g., (1) that the men aided by this work are those who occupy the most influential positions; (2) that the work is in the truest sense a *national* work; (3) that, as a direct result of the work in the United States, similar schools (both Summer and Correspondence) are being planned and established in Canada and England; (4) that the work has to do with that most important subject of study, viz., the Word of God,—there is ground, we believe, for thanking

Him in whose hand are all things, for the favor with which the work thus far has been received ; and there is also occasion for the supplication that, in its growth and development in the future, it may be divinely guided.

THERE is a world of difference between the view which maintains that the Old Testament writers (e. g., the author of Genesis, and the author of Judges) have incorporated "myths" in their writings, and that other view according to which these writers are supposed to have made use of "mythic phrases," or, as Professor Cheyne has expressed it, to have picked "the wayside flowers of popular mythic imagery."* Without noticing here the former of these views, the question may appropriately be asked whether the latter is to be considered in any sense "heretical." If, as must surely be granted, institutions of heathen origin were adopted by the Israelites, and, with perhaps a new meaning, received the divine sanction, is it not to be expected that, in the language of their writers, especially in the figurative language of poetry, when closely scrutinized, there will be found phrases which show a connection with the mythical ideas of the nations with whom they came into contact. It does not follow from this that the sacred writers believed or accepted the "myths" in connection with which these phrases had their origin. Does not the literature of our day abound in allusions to Roman and Greek mythology, in phrases and expressions which grew out of this mythology? And yet is the writer who makes use of these supposed to indicate thereby his belief in the particular myth upon which the phrase employed is based? The truth is, we may well be surprised that there is not in the sacred literature a much larger element than is actually to be found. It is not improbable that many of the words and expressions which have always baffled investigation, when elucidated, will prove to be cases of this kind. "The servants of the highest Truth may have so interwoven these earthly growths with blooms of another clime that for a long time they were unrecognized by the common eye ; but now that our sight has been strengthened by the criticism of other literatures, we should be dull indeed to disregard them ; and now that our conception of providential guidance has been widened, we should be equally dull to be offended at them."

* See Professor Cheyne's article on "The Use of Mythic Phrases by the Old Testament Writers," in *The Expositor*, Jan., 1888.